

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Monday 12 September 1977 CG NIDC 77-212C



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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Monday, 12 September 1977

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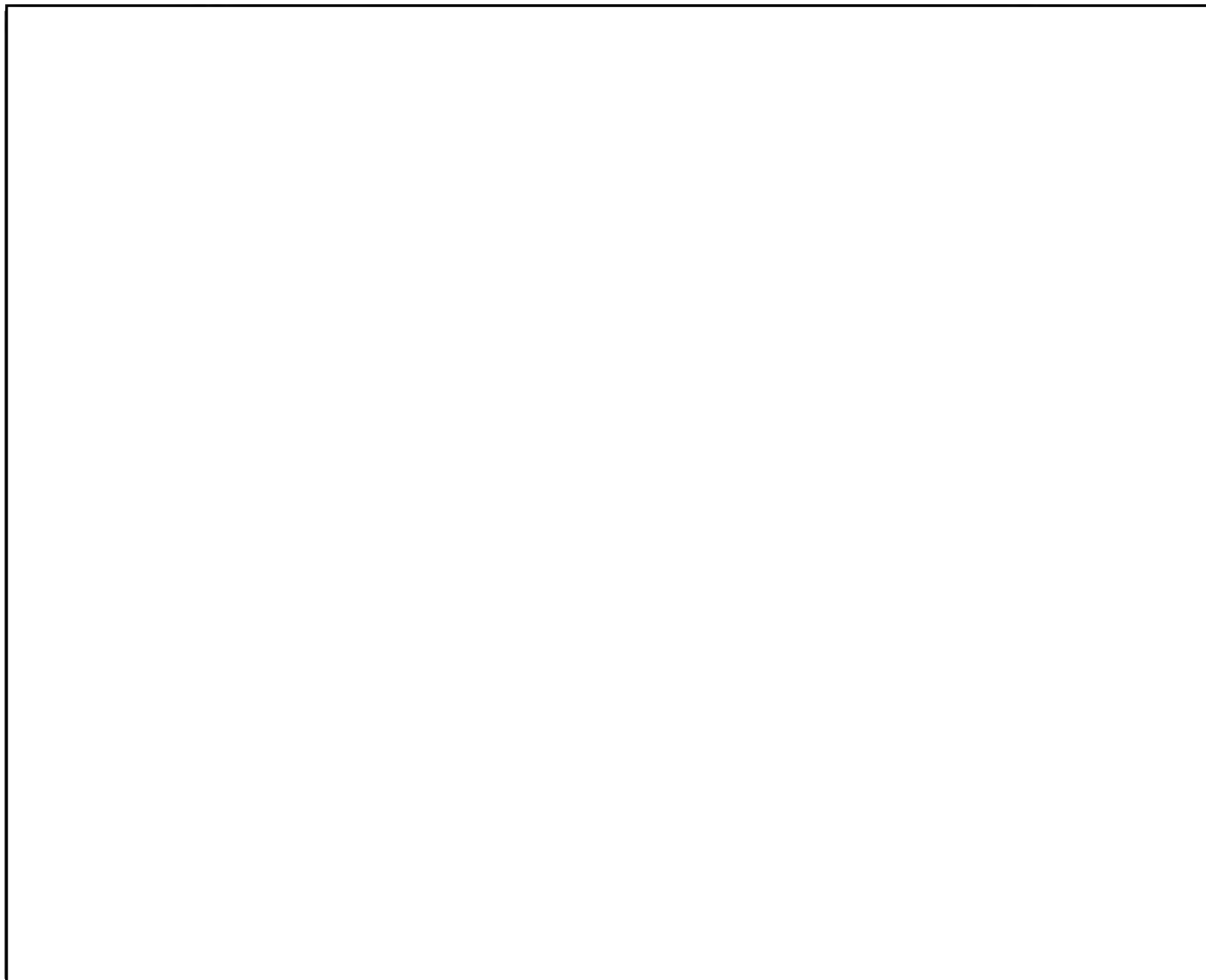
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ETHIOPIA-SOMALIA: Situation Report

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 Ethiopia apparently launched its first air attacks against Somali territory on Friday and Saturday. The strikes, conducted against the Somali air base at Hargeisa, may boost Ethiopian morale but could also trigger a widening of the war.

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[] The air strikes, carried out by F-5 fighters, apparently caused very little damage to the base and its surrounding facilities. A Soviet transport aircraft was hit during the raid, according to Somali news reports, but the base's fuel depots apparently were not damaged. We cannot confirm claims by the Somalis that they shot down three of the six Ethiopian aircraft that reportedly took part in the two raids.

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[] Somali press reports say Ethiopian aircraft also staged an attack Thursday on a border post, resulting in several casualties. The village's population apparently had been swelled by refugees from the heavy fighting at nearby Jijiga.

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[] The Ethiopians probably believed that the attacks on Hargeisa were justified by Somalia's assault on Jijiga, where regular Somali units have been more blatantly involved than in fighting at other Ethiopian garrisons.

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[] The air strike will almost certainly boost Ethiopian morale and may be followed by others. At the same time, the air attack may lead to a wider war by opening the way to a new range of tactics that could include a Somali strike on the port facilities and oil refinery at Assab in Eritrea. While the Somalis have probably been willing from the beginning of their invasion of the Ogaden to accept the consequences of Ethiopian air raids on Hargeisa, the Ethiopians can ill afford to lose their facilities at Assab. []

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PANAMA: Canal Treaty

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[] *//Panamanian Chief of Government Torrijos presented the signed copy of the new canal treaty to President Lakas Friday before a peaceful crowd of about 70,000--a figure somewhat short of government predictions but likely to be inflated in official estimates. Torrijos' relatively brief, moderate speech contained only one surprise. He announced that the plebiscite on the treaty will be held on 23 October--about a month earlier than most officials had predicted.//*

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[] *//The crowd was very large by Panamanian standards, although the government press had predicted more than 100,000 and the administration had expended considerable*

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energy to boost attendance. Officials are likely to be satisfied with but not elated by the gathering; a high-level administration figure earlier commented that the rally would be a test of treaty support and that more than 100,000 would be interpreted as strong public backing.//

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[] //No anti-US or anti-government incidents were reported. In the wake of Wednesday's anti-treaty demonstrations by students--firmly put down by the National Guard--there was a highly visible military presence throughout Panama City.//

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[] //Most officials, including the head of the electoral tribunal, had been assuming a mid-to-late November date for the plebiscite. Torrijos' announcement that it will take place on 23 October will fuel charges by some of his opponents that he is attempting to push through a favorable vote without sufficient public discussion. []

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BRIEF

USSR:

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[] Soviet coverage of the ceremonies in Washington surrounding the signing of the Panama Canal treaty was generally negative and critical. On Thursday, Moscow television commentary accused the US of pressing Panama to accept a treaty that leaves open the issue of future US military intervention. The commentary nevertheless concluded that reactionary forces in the US would prevent ratification of the treaty.

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[] On Friday *Pravda* grudgingly admitted that the treaty marks Washington's acceptance of Panamanian sovereignty but emphasized that the US still maintains control and privileges over the canal until the end of the century. Soviet media coverage also hit at US "hypocrisy," contrasting Washington's professed concern for human rights with its willingness to extend hospitality to such forces of "fascism" as the "bloody" Pinochet of Chile. []

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